


Once Upon A Time... for the very last time.
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do Presenting the final issue of FABLES as told by $\sim$ Bill Mark Steve Andrew Dan Jose Willingham Buckingham Leialoha Pepoy Green Marzan Jr. writer/creator penciller/inker inker inker inker inker

|  | Todd | Nimit | Rowena |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Loughridge | Klein | Malavia | Yow | Bond |

 extent that the gentlewomen and gentlemen who've been privileged to bring you these tales in years past, and who proudly present this one today, can take the opportunity to wish you a fond, if somewhat troubling,



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YOU HEARD
ROSERED. THOSE OF US
SUPPORING SNOW BETTER
SKEDADDLE.





## t.P.t.














# THIE LAST CLIfRA STORY 

Bill Willingham David Retersen Findrew Dalhouse Codd Flein Rowena Yow Shelly Bond wuriter - creator artist

## colors

letters assoc. editor
editor

WHEN ROSE RED TURNED INTO SOMETHING OF A HOMEBODY, CLARA THE RAVEN, EVER LOYAL TO THE END OF DAYS, BECAME HER ENVOY TO ALL OTHER WORLDS.



# The Losst Snow Quren story 

Bill Willingham Russ Braun Andrew Dalhouse Todd Klein Rowena Yow Shelly Bond writer - ereator arlist eolors letters associate ed. editor




# THE LAST BLOSSOM STORY 

In which we spend what might be a typical day with a grown demigoddess of nature and the hunt. .

Bill Willingham<br>writer - creator

Mark Schultz<br>illustrator

Todd Klein<br>design

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THERE is an owl in the anxious night, hooting loudly to summon the change in season. His name is Bringer of the Dying, because he knows the language of sleeping winter and commands the leaves to turn. Geese among the bulrushes hear his song and taste the chill in the new air. Sluggishly at first, waking from the nesting dream, they recall the exquisite urgency of the chevron, and begin to trumpet their intentions for long flights to come. Some insist they will lead this time, at the spear point of one of the hundred thousand formations. Others contest, or bluster, or surrender, each according to her strengths and will.

Chill winds carried the claxon honking south, to shaggy elk, in their regal battalions, and to gray bears that began to search out their winter's den, and badgers in their sett and, more distantly, to Bloss, who was out early, hunting.

She was lithe and untiring, moving swiftly across rolling plains of yellow-brown grass that had been green only weeks earlier. It would be misleading to say she didn't feel the cold, for she felt it to an extent matchless by the dull senses of mortals. But the cold air was a delight rather than a hardship to her. What clothing she wore was for reasons other than protection from the elements. It was decoration and statement, tribal, symbolic, a story told in a collection of carefully selected talismans.

From the waist down she told the tale of the army of conquest, who'd boldly marched across the golden plains and through river valleys last summer, with their overflying drones and portable missile batteries. They had rifles and side arms, terrible in their wonder, that shot beams of disdainful light, which left nothing behind of their targets. They'd come looking for war, but were frustrated in their efforts to find it.

Instead Bloss followed them in the day and killed them in the dark, silent and untraceable. She was patient and resolute. Three or four were slain in the night, every night, for weeks that became months, until the invaders' desire for this world was poisoned beyond recovery. In time the entire bunch packed up one day and fled back through the gate from which they'd appeared.

Now she wore some of the trappings of
their officers, belt and boots of fine black leather, and finely woven wine-dark slacks that clung to her like an embrace. She took special delight in the bold gold stripe that ran down each leg, as if to say, "I am someone who walks with more import of purpose than you."

One of the disintegration pistols rode on her belt, too light, it seemed, for the gravity of its power. She'd never used it, because it seemed a wasteful thing to remove an object or body entirely from this existence, leaving naught to scavenge or bury. But she'd taken it from a man who'd also failed to use it in time, and that had amused her in a trophy-taking way. For those reasons, and perhaps a bit of just-in-case, she enjoyed having it.

Her dress from the waist up told a different story. Her vest was fashioned from the magically impenetrable skin of Manaha Wendigo, whom she'd tracked for years, as it slaughtered its way across two continents. The filigreed shirt underneath was the last surviving treasure from an old lover, who lavished her with gifts of fine silk and linen on each visit to her world. He'd stopped coming years ago, after it was clear he would continue to age, while it seemed she never would.

She carried a bow and other weapons she'd made herself, fine things of subtle, painstaking artifice and elegant design.
"Bel! Kai! Catch up!" she called to the twins behind her. Bellerophon and Kaimera, were Aniwye Panthers, startlingly quick in the short sprint, but lacking in long chase endurance.
"Or maybe you can slow down a bit," Kai shouted back to her between labored breaths. "Better yet, a rest."
"Slackers," Bloss said. "You don't see Jakro whining for rest."

A giant pewter-colored cave bear ran beside her. Jakro was fat and powerful, covered in many old scars of battle. He huffed clouds of vapor into the night air, as it teased its way into morning.
"Actually, I could use a breather," Jakro said, "if for no other reason than kindness towards fellow travelers."
"Fine," Bloss said, and slowed from run, to lope, to walk.

By the time the panthers had caught up, they had paused on a rocky escarpment overlooking a river valley. A branch of the Bone River meandered below them, still a dark


## The Last Blossom Story

ribbon in the waxing light, that wouldn't find the valley for an hour to come.
"Bloss has a scent," Jakro said, as the twins joined them.

Descended directly from the North Wind, she'd forged a special relationship with the gusts and breezes of this new, unspoiled world she'd made her home. She always got the scent first, which sometimes frustrated the animals, who knew they had keener senses than low humans. It was a matter of debate, though, if Bloss could be considered strictly human. If so, she was certainly an exception to the rule - to most rules, in fact.
"Breakfast?" Bel said.
"Hunters, not prey," Bloss said. "New arrivals."
She had that scrunch of the skin above her eyes that indicated annoyance, a mental thorn that would bother her until she addressed it. From past experience Bel realized (and immediately resigned himself to the knowledge) the important business of securing their next meal would be delayed.
"Let's go have a look at them," she said, and started off again in a loping run she could maintain, without rest, for days on end. Jakro could easily keep up with her, for most of a day. The twin panthers could only do the same, perhaps for as much as an hour, before lagging behind again.

Bloss could have left them all far behind, had she chosen to do so. She was, in truth, a creature of remarkable power. She could take on any number of different forms that could run with unbelievable speed. Or she could simply launch herself into swift flight, merely by demanding the sky accept her. But there were strict courtesies of the hunt to observe. She'd set off in the night with her three companions, proven friends, and wouldn't abandon them lightly.

So instead they ran together, the twins growling and grumbling all the way.

The bulrushes were still green along the riverbank, where the changing seasons hadn't touched them yet. Three men and one woman walked through the rushes by the river. Cautiously they moved, in single file, alert and wary. They carried heavy packs on their backs and held high-powered hunting rifles, ready to use them in an instant. The sun had finally reached the low valley an hour ago and the day was warming.

They wore khaki and camouflage, smelled of powerful chemical repellants, and kept the rising sun at bay under wide-brimmed hats.
"We should establish our first camp soon," Pierce said. He tried to hide the fact that he was struggling under the weight of his gear,
but couldn't quite keep the strain out of his voice. Pack your own load was one of the agreed-upon rules of their outing. They styled themselves veterans of hardship and bravado, the Alphas, adventurous true heirs of Clovis People in a world gone irretrievably soft.
"Not yet," Olembe, their elected leader, said. His skin was as black as the darkest night, in sharp contrast to the others, who were Nordic pale. "Not down here by the main river, where who-knows-what will come to drink. What we want - what we're doing here now - is to locate a smaller creek or rivulet joining this, flowing into it. We'll follow that out of the tall grass, up into the hills. Make camp there, where we have water, but not the main body of water."
"We have the sonic fence to keep things away," Anna Bily said. She had freckles over every inch of her face and bare forearms like the stars in the sky.
"We do, and we'll deploy it to be sure. But I'm not familiar with the animals of this world. Are you?" Olembe asked.
"Of course not. That's why we're all here."
"Then let's start out taking every reasonable precaution and not simply rely on a few electronic trinkets that have yet to be proved."
"But they have been proved, time and again," she said. "I've camped amongst polar bears and slept undisturbed. Trust me, they work."
"Good to know. But what if there's something bigger and meaner here, with no evolutionary aversion to high-pitched frequencies? Better we camp higher up, where we can see everything coming."

In the aftermath of the magical revolution that had transformed what had previously been known to some as the Mundy World, they'd learned about the gateways connecting uncounted new worlds, ripe for exploitation. In time they'd heard whispered rumors of the Hunting World, where the great creatures of old still thrived.
"Megafauna and more," Pierce had said, putting together his dream expedition of the best of the best, by invitation only. He'd spent a fortune to do it, but eventually gained acceptance into the company of the finest sports hunters alive. "Hell, even dinosaurs, or dragons. I heard all sorts of stories."

Olembe's will prevailed and they constructed their base camp high, just below the scree field of a looming mountain giant, and above any vegetation tall enough to conceal anything larger than an approaching mouse. There was, after all, a good reason they unanimously chose him to lead. Even among the finest on Earth, his deeds stood out.
"We should name it," Pierce said. "Do you

The Last Blossom Story
think we should name it?"
"What's that?"
"The mountain," he said. "It's as big as any I've seen, outside of Everest." Pierce had never actually seen Everest, but didn't consider that relevant to his larger point. "Hell, we should probably name the river too, and everything else. We've earned that much just by showing up."
"Maybe they already have names,"
Lawrence said. He seemed a bit too bookish to be a hunter of renown, but had often proved himself more than capable. He worked without wasted movement to pitch his small tent. Personal tents were the closest things to luxury they'd agreed to allow themselves. Other than that, weight, bulk and portability ruled every decision. Dehydrated food pouches would be reconstituted in collapsible pots and heated over individual chemical stoves. They would endure privations of comfort and abundance in order to keep the expedition down to the five principals. No porters. No cooks or camp managers. Only pack what you can personally carry was the new gospel. Old-style safaris were permanently out of vogue.
"Not likely. Do you see any signs of even primitive habitation? There are no people here and never were. Besides, even if this place were crawling with locals, history has shown us time and again that nothing counts until an educated white man shows up with the ability to write it down."
"No offense, Olembe," Pierce added as an afterthought.
"None taken, white devil," Olembe said without inflection, or even a hint of a forgiving smile. "Name it, if you want to. You spent enough getting us here. At the least, that should also buy you naming rights."
"It does make sense," Lawrence said. "If we publish an account of this excursion, and I intend to do so, we can't just say we found a valley with a river, near a mountain, where we shot a big critter. Fiction or history, one needs proper names to give a story life. 'And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.' There's significance to the fact that assigning names was the very first job God gave to man."

They slept restless in the first night, awaking often to unfamiliar sounds.

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In the morning they awoke to find Bloss and her companions within the heart of their camp. The chemical deterrents of the outer
perimeter had been moved and buried. The small plastic pylons forming the inner sonic fence had been smashed, exposing the ruins of their battery packs and solid-state circuits.

She crouched by the stone ring of the campfire they'd made to mark the center of the camp, after painstakingly hauling armfuls of wood up from below. She had rekindled the dead fire and sipped some of their coffee out of Anna Bily's metal cup.
"I miss coffee," Bloss said to Olembe, as he was the first to emerge from his tent. "Mom and Dad always have coffee when I visit."

Olembe took in the improbable scene in a silence that masked his fluster. There was a giant bear sitting placidly near the strange woman, a bear bigger than any species ever recorded on Earth. Two mature panthers, with alien markings on their dark coats, prowled around them, coughing their feline restlessness. The woman seemed completely relaxed in their company. One by one, the other hunters emerged. Lawrence and Bily, sensing something amiss, both had the presence of mind to bring their rifles with them.
"Don't try to use those against my friends," Bloss said, "or me, for that matter. If I had to take them from you, I might not be able to do it gently enough to keep them in good working order.
"Who are you?" Anna Bily said.
"What do you want?" Olembe said.
"You're from the Mundy World, aren't you?" Bloss said. She smiled, not so much in welcome, but in the way a scientist might marvel at an interesting find. "Earth, I mean. Probably not very mundy at all anymore. Lots of big changes about the time I moved away. Just a child back then. Hard to remember much."
"Yes," Lawrence said. "Earth. Some do still call it Mundy, but in a nostalgic way, I think, or maybe ironically."
"Amazing. And you finally found your way here. I suppose it had to happen sooner or later. You'll have to pack up and go home though. Right now."
"Why?" Olembe said.
"According to whose laws?" Pierce said. One panther and then the other growled low growls his way.
"Don't be rude," Bloss said to the cats. Then to Pierce, "Mine, I suppose. Not really formal laws, since I'm alone in making them. You have to go because I just told you so."
"The reason we're here in the first place," Pierce said, "is that none of us do well under those who like to tell folks what to do. We don't much hold ourselves accountable to any man - or woman - and whatever laws or whims they try to impose."

The Last Blossom Story
The giant bear rose to his four legs, and all at once there seemed to be a dark heat emanating from it. Olembe measured the distance to his tent, and his own rifle within. He silently cursed himself for breaking his own rule about carrying his weapon at all times, especially when there was no chance he might need it.
"I don't like that one," Jakro said, looking at Pierce.

There weren't quite gasps of astonishment, to hear a bear talk. Expressions of surprise, at most. Talking animals weren't entirely unknown in their world since the change, which had occurred long before any of these were born. They were a rarity still, but not unheard of.
"Quiet, Jak," Bloss said. "This is my business. Mind your own."

She threw the dregs of her borrowed coffee into the fire and stood to her full height, stretching a bit as she did so.
"Good for you," Bloss said, singling Pierce out with her unsettling gaze. "A man who stands his ground. I like those with an independent mind and a practiced stubbornness against those who can't live and let live. Reminds me of my dad. But this is a different matter altogether. This isn't your ground to stand on. It's mine."
"This valley?" Bily said.
"A bit more than that. I can't put off the boys' breakfast too much longer, so let's wrap this up. I'll give it to you formally."

Bloss took a moment to compose herself. She brushed dirt off her knees and carefully placed an errant strand of hair behind one ear.
"I am Blossom," she said, "daughter of the Wolf God; daughter of Snow White, who gave both the dying and the renewal into my care. This is my world. You're trespassing."
"Some sort of self-elected nature goddess?" Bily said.
"My pedigree might suggest as much."
"The entire world is yours?" Lawrence said. "How is that so?"

Pierce said, "What right have you to take all of it and leave none for others?"
"No right to deprive others," Bloss said. "But the others are already here. You imagine a wasteland in which I'm alone and greedy for every empty hill and valley. In fact it's fat with population. Every nook and cranny is filled with homesteaders, each of which has prior claim. My ownership then is more a matter of a caretaker's authority, rather than possession. But to answer your real question, anyone who owns this world does so by the only law that pertains - the ability to keep it."
"Implying you've done violence against those like us, from the outside, who've stumbled onto it," Pierce said.
"No one stumbles through a world gate. One look at your gear and I know you're here by intention. But yes, I've killed to discourage intruders."
"You're Cerberus," Lawrence said. "A guard at the gate to paradise."
"Among other things. I wear a lot of hats. In the spring I call up the growing and birthing. In the fall I hunt, to cull the weak, prior to the trials of winter."
"You encourage and protect life in one season," Bily said, "but turn around and kill it in another?"
"Every coin has two sides. What true hunter isn't also a devoted naturalist? It's getting late and I'm beginning to suspect you're trying to keep me talking. Gather up your things and I'll escort you back to the gate. We'll want to move fast, so only bring what you can easily carry."
"But this world," Olembe said. He used her invitation as leave to walk back to his tent, within quick reach of his rifle now.
"Yes?"
"Are you aware it's referred to as The Hunting World?"
"Very much so, in the myriad languages of man and beast, that's what we call it too."
"But we're hunters," he said. "And yet we're not welcome here?"
"Ah, that's where you got confused," Bloss said. "I'll have to figure out some way to get the word out about that. Yes, this is a world dedicated to the hunt. But whatever made you think you could show up and be the hunters?"

In his dark nidifice at the summit of Sky Reaching Mountain, Arok the Thunderhawk stirred and tasted the cloying flavor of exotic prey on the wind.

Horraru the Terror rose up from his buried lair under the Bone River, letting the clean cold water of the surface wash the bottom mud from his scales. He felt the remote internal sizzle as supercharged adrenaline flooded his sprinting sacks.
"What if we refuse to leave?" Pierce said.
"Do you think I offered you my escort to protect them from you?" Bloss said. "If you refuse to go, then I wash my hands of you, withdraw my protection, and let the Hunting World hunt."

In the sky, lusty and raucous formations of geese flew south, honking their deeds and intentions to all who would listen. In mountain and valley, lake and forest, for leagues in every direction, things rustled and stirred, tasting the air, which carried the news that sacred Blossom of the Sky and Earth had moved on, leaving four unguarded things behind. The message was clear. The hunt could now begin.

## The Last Pinocchio Story

- Bill:Willingham Lee Garbett Rindrew Dalhouse Codd Elein Rowena Yow Shelly Bond er Writer-creator artist colors MANY YEARS FROM NOW,
IN AMAGICAL WORLD
THATUSED TO BE FAR
TOO MUNDANE...




# The Last Geppetto Story 

Bill Willingham Joëlle Jones Rndrew Dalhouse Zodd $\mathbb{R}$ lein Rowena Yow Shelly Bond writer - creator artist
colors
letters assoc. editor
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assoc.ed.

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LATER...
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UP! WAKE

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# The Last Story of شMany Fables \# 

## Bill Willingham Findrew Pepoy Findrew Dalhouse Zodd klein Rowena Yow Shelly Bond writer - creator artist <br> colors <br> letters assoc. editor




"He was one of the pretty, pretty ones too, and look how HE ended up."

# BLUK STMES, BLIKE MOON. BLUE SUEDE SHOES AIDD FODS B D DUS Beind the last 





## $4 \rightarrow 0 \rightarrow 10$ <br> "THE FIRST CHILD WILL BE AKING.' <br> BILL WILLINGHAM WRITER ~ CREATOR <br> TEDDY <br> KRISTIANSEN ARTIST <br> TODD KLEIN LETTERS <br> ROWENA YOW ASSOC. ED. <br> SHELLY BOND EDITOR




## Tho Summer Prophecy Mill ilitil ind

BILL WILLINGHAM
WRITER ~ CREATOR
$\begin{array}{ccccc}\text { AARON } & \text { ANDREW TODD ROWENA SHELLY } \\ \text { ALEXOVICH DALHOUSE KLEIN } & \text { YOW } \\ \text { ARTIST BOND } & \text { COLORS LETTERS ASSOC:ED. EDITOR }\end{array}$







# The Summer Prophecy <br> "THE SIXTH WILL JUDGE THE REST." 

BILL WILLINGHAM NIKO HENRICHON TODD KLEIN ROWENA YOW SHELLY BOND WRITER ~ CREATOR

ARTIST

LETTERS

EDITOR


# The Summer Prophecy 

TODD KLEIN YOW BOND LETTERS ASSOC.ED. EDITOR


# THE LAST TOY STORY <br> Bill Willingham writer - artist creator <br> Andrew Dalhouse colors <br> Todd <br> Klein <br> letters <br> Rowena Yow assoc.ed. <br> Shelly Bond editor 




"Once upon a time... in a fictional land called New York City."

## IN (A CASTLE DARK

In which we embark on what might be called the Last mundy Story, but also the Last madoy Story, and the Last King Cole Story

Bill willingham Lan Medina Mark Farmer writer-creator penciller inker Lee Loughridge Codd Endein Rowifin Zow colors an letters Dassoc.ieditor:







MAYORS, CONGRESSMEN, SPIES, SCIENTISTS, STATESMEN, PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS, SENATORS AND GENERALS HAVE VISITED THE BARRICADES OVER






FOR REASONS OF OBSTINACY, PERHAPS, SOME INSIST THE FIRST ALTHENTIC MUNDY-INTO-FABLE TRANSITION HAPPENED WITH BOBBY SPECKLAND OF GARY,






# THELLSTTRANKIESTORY 

## Bill Willingham Megan Levens Andrew Dalhouse Zodd Elein Rowena Yow Shelly Bond cwriter - creator <br> artist <br> colors <br> letters assoc. editor <br> editor



"Nol'm SERIOUS.
Do you want to LIVE? What prize would you pay to escape DEATH today?"

# WHE LIFTN DEETVI YMOFIJ 

Bill Willingham Bryan Talbot andrew Dalhouse. Todd Blein Bowena Yow Shelly Bond writer creator aptist

Colops
letters
assoc. caiton
cditon
"Clickety Clack!
Get into my sack!"
"1 just realized something, Wolf.
There was only one tent and one sleeping bag."








That's it. That's all, other than to wish you

## GOODBYE and GOODNIGHT




Part One: The Preamble

So then, a happy ending for some. In fiction and history, and (perhaps most important) in fairy tale, that's about as much as one can hope for.

Which brings us to our curtain.
The stage lights have dimmed. The house lights have come up to help you find your way out of our playhouse. Time to go home, and feel free to take the shortcut through those dark woods. Don't worry about the scary, almost monstrous, sounds you hear from deep inside. I'm certain it's only a rustling of the leaves.

There's no more story to tell.
Sure, we could go on a bit longer - hint at what happened in the Bigby and Snow family during the uncounted centuries which took place between the final page of the larger main story in this volume and the big double barreled gatefold at the end (yes, as I only recently learned, that's what you call that extraordinary single panel that sprawled languidly over four fold-out pages). We could follow Dare beyond that white nothingness, to reassure ourselves that he eventually did go on to a better world. We could detail the sixteen great crises that befell King Ambrose's Kingdom of Haven, after the closing of Fabletown and the great diaspora that followed. Or we could tell the many tales of the magic school that grew in the heart of New York, and how it changed the Mundy world into the most magical of all the worlds. I suppose we could even show you the countless misadventures of Pinocchio as President of the United States, and how his scandalous reign ended abruptly three days into his second term. But that would be just adding detail for its own sake. You already know many adventures were had. Kingdoms rose and fell. Magic was learned and forgotten and learned again. Wolf children grew up to have children of their own, and they had children, and so on, worlds without end.

Stories aren't told by the credited storytellers alone, which is why (as l've written in more detail elsewhere) I'm the one who actually wrote the complete works of Shakespeare - because I dutifully finished my parts of each of his plays, poems,
sonnets and ditties, by watching them, reading them, and filling in my share of the details.

That's the secret that's never been a secret at all. Stories don't exist until they've been read or viewed or heard, and fleshed out within the minds of an audience. It's a collaboration that requires imagination and effort from both camps. We've told our bit about FABLES, and even left a few roadmarks to help you find your way from here. If anything's missing, it's left to you to keep going until you can fill it in. Who knows? Maybe in the days to come you'll let us know how it all turned out.

## Part Two: Counting the (Magical) Beans

In the thirteen lucky years since the first issue, we've produced just shy of six thousand pages of story within the larger FABLES universe. Broken down further, that works out to about 26 thousand (plus) individual panels, aka individual illustrations (of which I personally produced exactly eighteen - not 18 thousand, mind you, but only eighteen). Since each panel averaged just a pinch over two captions and/or dialogue balloons per panel, which in turn average a tad less than two sentences per balloon, that gives us somewhere in the neighborhood of 102 thousand spoken lines. Throw in another four hundred or so pages of prose story and it begins to add up to something.

FABLES has been translated into 14 languages and has been published in 20 countries.

We produced one FABLES board game, which you can find in the pages of issue 100, and licensed one FABLES video game, called A Wolf Among Us, which you can find all over the damn place. As of this writing, we've yet to see FABLES translated into movies or a television series, but we're plugging away at that.

To my immediate knowledge we've inspired no less than two weddings (both marriages of which are meandering along just fine - thank you for asking). From other relationships, I know of a baby who was named Snow, after the FABLES Snow White, another named Dare, after the cub named Dare ("We don't intend for him to grow up timid," says Dad, as Mom nods in agreement), and a third, still not arrived at the time I met his parents, was promised to be named Ambrose Blue, after two other wellknown FABLES characters. I've also met another couple wrestling with some way to name their expected girl-child some version of Totenkinder, but I recall cautioning them
against it (the name does mean Child Killer after all) and never did learn the final result.

Three songs were written about FABLES. Maybe more.

At least one lawsuit occurred, going all the way to a New York court and a judge's ruling, over who gets possession of the jointly bought issues of FABLES, following a bad break-up. Maybe more.

More Fables-themed tattoos than I can guess at have been created and implemented.

Anecdotally at least (comic publishers, even the big ones, don't really have the deep pockets it takes to do exhaustive demographics research), FABLES seems to be one of the rare series to have more readers than copies sold. They're lent to husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, siblings, friends. There might be more female readers than male, but I can't swear to that.

## Part Three: Gratitude

This is the tough part. So many people have helped to create, publish, distribute, sell and share FABLES with the wider world that it would be impossible to thank everyone by name. We'd have to double the size of this volume to have even a chance at publishing a full list. Hell, even those who deserve a special mention for going above and beyond are too numerous to single out.

Should I mention the nights lost, staying late at work, that Shelly and her editorial team had to endure, to make sure the next issue shipped on time, even though the writer was horribly late - thus making everyone else in the chain of production horribly late? Should I mention the legion of incredible pencillers, inkers, colorists and letterers (actually, that last job title should be singular) who've put in 20 -hour days and imperiled their health and family relationships, to get last-minute work done, because the writer was horribly late yet again?

And what about the retailers who've hand-sold FABLES to customers, with such astonishing love and dedication, creating an army of loyal, returning readers, so that the afore-mentioned writer hasn't had to get a real job for more than a decade? Should I call them out for special recognition?

And what about that one artist who bore most of the weight of FABLES for the entirety of its run. Surely I should mention him at least?

## I should.

But there's no room to do so. Attempting it would guarantee leaving someone - many someones, in fact - out, which would be a crime too onerous to bear.

So, instead I must thank you collectively, for sticking with us for these thirteen years. Trust that my gratitude, horribly lacking in specifics, is overflowing in volume. No matter what comes of my story-spinning career from this point on (for which I've got a few plans), I will never forget what you did for me during this wonderful time. And as for that most-of-the-weight-bearing artist mentioned a mere three paragraphs above? I see that we've a wee bit of room here, so maybe he can be persuaded to add a note of his own.

For my part, I'll end with this.
Thank you, thank you, thank you, and farewell.
—Bill Willingham May 3, 2015

## THE MOST-OF-THE-WEIGHTBEARING ARTIST'S AFTERWORD TO THE AFTERWORD BIT (Also known as Bucky's Wee Bit)

When you are working long hours, day after day, month after month, on a series as rich and complex and immersive as FABLES, it's very easy to miss things. Holidays with your wife. Family birthdays. Friends' parties. Life rushes by as you remain fixated on where the story goes next and you race to keep ahead of that next deadline.

You miss how lucky you are to find such an inspiring and generous collaborator as Bill, who created this universe and then shared its development with you.

You find yourself without a moment to spare to contemplate how fortunate you are to work with such talented artists as Steve, Todd, Andrew, Lee, and all the others who have been a part of the FABLES family. The best creative team in comics.

You miss the battles fought and won by Shelly, our fearless Editor, who has championed us from the start, and everything Vertigo and DC have done to help our series prosper.

There's one thing I couldn't fail to miss though, and that is the loyalty, support and enthusiasm our wonderful readers have given to FABLES for the last thirteen years. It has been both a pleasure and a privilege to work with Bill, and the rest of the amazing FABLES team, every month, to bring you these stories. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you.

And now, I really should be getting back to work. Although I can't shake the feeling I'm missing something.

Wait a minute? Is FABLES ending?

- Mark Buckingham




## Bill's Comic Writing School Lesson 67.3: The Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome

When writing a comic script, you need to be two writers in one, because you're simultaneously writing to two different readerships.

On one hand, you need to be a creative and sometimes even poetic writer - telling a compelling story with your words, which are terse lines of dialogue and the occasional caption. This is the writing your readers will see and judge on literary merits.

On the other hand, you must be a superb technical writer, aiming only for clarity and nothing else. Your audience is one person - the artist who's going to draw the panels and pages you exactingly
detailed, just for him.
So there you are, two writers
in one: the artistic scribbler who can select just the right phrase to move and inspire a reader, and the dry and dull technical writer for whom clarity of instruction is the only goal.

But here's the trick: like Jekyll and Hyde, you must be able to switch from one to the other (and back) often and effortlessly. Schizophrenic? You bet! Welcome to the nut-house job of writing funnybooks.

Look! Here's a handy example of three script pages selected from this very volume:

Fables
Issue One Hundred and Fifty
Short Story
Title: The Summer Prophecy
Subtitle: The first child will be a king.
By Bill Willingham
1 Page

Editorial Note: This is the first of the seven one-page Prophecy stories that need to appear in direct sequence, one immediately after another, in numerical order. Each of these one-page stories will be illustrated by a different artist. Thanks.

Page One (six panels)

This isn't really a panel. It's the standardized couple of inches of space you need to leave at the top of the page for this story's titles and credits.

1) Title (display lettering): The Summer Prophecy
2) Subtitle (display lettering): The first child will be a king.
3) Credits

We see a daytime exterior shot of the North Wind's castle (as seen in many previous issues of Fables), high in the mountains of some world or another. As per usual, it's cold and snowy.
4) Voice (from castle): That's me.
5) Same Voice (connected balloon): Old Father Boreas.
6) Same Voice (connected balloon): Winter Wolf.

## Panel Three

Same scene, but now we zoom in on one of the castle ramparts to see Winter, in her common guise as a little girl (also as seen most often in many recent issues of Fables). She is at one of the walls, overlooking her lands down below, but now she looks directly at us, breaking the fourth wall, talking to the readers. It's windy, blustery here, as it always is, and her hair blows in the wind.
7) Winter: North Wind.
8) Winter: The King.
9) Winter: I know, right? A little girl? King, rather than queen?

## Panel Four

Same scene. Winter walks and talks with us, strolling along the ramparts.
10) Winter: Don't let it trouble you.
11) Winter: Semantics.
12) Winter: Quirks of translating old tongues into new.

## Panel Five

Same scene. Winter strolls along, talking to us as she does. One thing is clear. She's all alone up there. Her attendants are nowhere to be seen. She should look isolated, aloof, and just a bit haughty here.
13) Winter: What you should worry about is what sort of king I'm going to turn out to be. Good or bad? Petty and venial? Or a river to my people?
14) Winter: Well, guess what? I worry about that too.

Panel Six
Same scene. Winter turns to look at us more directly, confiding a secret to us.
She seems just a touch worried.
15) Winter: And so far the only solid answer I've been able to come up?
16) Winter: We'll see.

The finished page, for comparison.

## A FABLES GALLERY

Bigby and Snow commission piece by Mark Buckingham




Sketches by Steve Leialoha made in preparation for his art on FABLES \#140



To Shelly Bond and Shelly Roeberg, two editors who wrangled me through all of Fables and most of my writing career to date.

To Irma. My muse (my Rose Red), my friend, my greatest champion, my one true love.


Logo design by Nancy Ogami

## FABLES: FAREWELL

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## FAREWELL, FABLETOWN

Completing more than thirteen years of critically acclaimed storytelling, FABLES \#150 is here! Doubling as the final volume of the series, creator Bill Willingham, artist Mark Buckingham and a host of the industry's finest artists deliver the end to this legendary Vertigo series that sees the final fates of beloved characters Bigby Wolf, Snow White, Rose Red, Boy Blue, Pinocchio and countless others. Ready or not, ever after is here.

The New York Times
Best-Selling Series and Winner of 14 Eisner Awards

